

Message Text

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ACTION EB-08

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 CAB-02 CIAE-00 COME-00 DODE-00
DOTE-00 INR-07 NSAE-00 CIEP-01 FAA-00 PM-04 H-01 L-03
NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06 /069 W
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FM AMEMBASSY PARIS
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 9589
INFO AMEMBASSY LONDON
FAA BRUSSELS
AMCONSUL BORDEAUX

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E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: EAIR, FR, UK, US
SUBJECT: CIVAIR: FRENCH REACTION TO POSTPONE-
MENT OF PORT AUTHORITY DECISION ON CONCORDE

1. SUMMARY--FRENCH MEDIA AND OFFICIAL PUBLIC REACTION
HAS BEEN MODERATE FOLLOWING ANNOUNCED POSTPONEMENT OF
NEW YORK PORT AUTHORITY DECISION ON CONCORDE. THERE IS
MUCH SPECULATION IN THE MEDIA ON REASONS FOR THE POSTPO-
NEMENT. FOREIGN MINISTRY OFFICIAL INFORMALLY EXPRESSED
GRAVE CONCERN OVER PROTRACTED DELAY IN DECISION, WHICH
CAN BE EXPLOITED BY OPPOSITION AS WELL AS CHIRAC. RPR
WILL HOLD PRESS CONFERENCE ON CONCORDE NEXT WEEK. REAC-
TION IS REPORTEDLY MORE HEATED IN TOULOUSE, PARTICULARLY
BECAUSE OF THREAT OF UNEMPLOYMENT AT SNIAS. END SUMMARY.

2. PERHAPS BECAUSE NEW YORK'S DECISION ON CONCORDE HAS
DRAGGED ON SO LONG AND ALREADY HAS BEEN THE SUBJECT OF
SO MUCH COMMENTARY AND SPECULATION, FRENCH
MEDIA HAVE REACTED FAIRLY MODERATELY TO THE LATEST POST-
PONEMENT BY THE NEW YORK PORT AUTHORITY OF ITS DECISION.

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REPORTING HAS, HOWEVER, BEEN SUPPLEMENTED BY CONSIDER-
ABLE SPECULATION OVER THE MEANING OF THE POST-
PONEMENT. ONE OF THE LEADING COMMENTATORS ON EUROPE NO.
ONE RADIO SAID TWO DAYS IN A ROW THAT DECISION ON
WHETHER CONCORDE COULD LAND AT NEW YORK NOW CLEARLY HAD
TO BE TAKEN BY PRESIDENT CARTER. LE MONDE ON FEB. 6-7
CARRIED STORY FROM ITS NEW YORK CORRESPONDENT

REPORTING THAT NEW DELAY IN PORT AUTHORITY'S DECISION WAS POLITICALLY INSPIRED IN ORDER TO GIVE PRESIDENT CARTER MORE TIME TO STUDY DOSSIER IN EVENT HE WISHES INTERVENE TO INFLUENCE GOV. CAREY'S POSITION AND HENCE THAT OF THE PORT AUTHORITY. THERE IS SPECULATION THAT ABOUT DAOUD AFFAIR MAY HAVE CONTRIBUTED TO TEMPERING FRENCH REACTION, WITH PRESS NOTING THAT FEELINGS ARE STILL RUNNING HIGH WITHIN JEWISH COMMUNITY IN NEW YORK BECAUSE OF ABOUT DAOUD AFFAIR AND SO PERHAPS IT IS NOT A BAD IDEA FINAL DECISION ON CONCORDE IS BEING POSTPONED UNTIL THINGS QUIET DOWN. (LES ECHOS REPORTS AIR FRANCE HAS LOST OVER 20 MILLION FRs. IN CANCELLED BOOKINGS BY AMERICAN PASSENGERS BECAUSE OF REACTION TO ABOUT DAOUD AFFAIR).

3. LES ECHOS REPORTS THAT FRENCH AND BRITISH HESITATE TO BRING NEW PRESSURE TO BEAR TO INFLUENCE THE DECISION AT NEW YORK, ALL THE MORE SO SINCE THE FRENCH ARE UNCERTAIN WHETHER THEY CAN COUNT ON UNWAVERING BRITISH SUPPORT. LE MONDE EXPRESSES CONCERN OVER WHAT IT UNDERSTANDS TO HAVE BEEN WISHY-WASHY POSITION ON CONCORDE TAKEN BY BRITISH WITH VICE PRESIDENT MONDALE. IN AN EARLIER STORY ON FEB. 5 LE MONDE ALSO CLAIMED TO SEE BEHIND THE PORT AUTHORITY'S LATEST DELAY PRESSURES FROM THE US AIRCRAFT INDUSTRY TO KEEP OUT EUROPEAN COMPETITION. IN THIS CONNECTION LE MONDE, LIKE LES ECHOS AND LE FIGARO, MAKES REFERENCE TO WESTERN AIRLINES' FAILURE TO BUY AIRBUS.

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4. SECSTATE FOR TRANSPORTATION CAVAILLE SAID IN TOULOUSE ON FEB. 7 THAT THE NEW DELAY AT NEW YORK "CHANGES NOTHING" AND HE REMAINED CALM AND CONFIDENT OVER THE FINAL OUTCOME. GILBERT PEROL, DIRECTOR GENERAL OF AIR FRANCE, TOLD AFP THAT WHILE HE WAS DISAPPOINTED HE ALSO SAW "POSITIVE ASPECT" IN DELAY SINCE IT MEANT PORT AUTHORITY WAS GIVING CAREFUL STUDY TO A DOSSIER THAT IN HIS VIEW COULD ONLY BE FAVORABLE TO CONCORDE BASED ON NOISE MONITORING RESULTS AT DULLES.

5. LUCIEN NEUWIRTH, RPR DEPUTY AND PRESIDENT OF FRENCH PARLIAMENTARY COMMITTEE FOR DEFENSE OF CONCORDE, WAS, NOT SURPRISINGLY, A BIT MORE OUTSPOKEN IN HIS REACTION. IN A STATEMENT TO AFP, NEUWIRTH CLAIMED THAT PROTRACTED DELAY IN NEW YORK'S DECISION ENDANGERED THE WHOLE FUTURE OF THE FRENCH AIRCRAFT INDUSTRY. BLOCKING CONCORDE'S CHANCES AT NEW YORK MEANT BLOCKING EMERGENCE OF A COMPETITIVE AIRCRAFT INDUSTRY IN EUROPE THAT COULD CHALLENGE THE QUASI-MONOPOLY OF US AIRCRAFT CONSTRUCTORS ON WORLD

MARKETS, HE CLAIMED. AFP QUOTES NEUWIRTH AS CONCLUDING:

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"OUR AMERICAN FRIENDS MUST UNDERSTAND THAT CONCORDE IS NOT ONLY A SYMBOL OF WHICH WE ARE PROUD, BUT THAT WE WILL ALSO DRAW CONCLUSIONS FROM THEIR ATTITUDE TOWARDS CONCORDE ON THE SINCERITY OF THEIR SENTIMENTS AS REGARDS A POLITICALLY AND ECONOMICALLY INDEPENDENT EUROPE."
(COMMENT: AFP HAD EARLIER REPORTED NEUWIRTH PLANNED TO MAKE DEMARCHE TO EMBASSY ON BEHALF HIS PARLIAMENTARY COMMITTEE, BUT THUS FAR HE HAS NOT CONTACTED US).

6. ONLY DIRECT OFFICIAL REACTION WE HAVE OBTAINED FROM GOF WAS DURING INFORMAL CONVERSATION FEB. 4 WITH CLAUDE-LAFONTAINE OF FOREIGN MINISTRY. SHE SAID THAT IMPLICATIONS OF FURTHER POSTPONEMENT OF PORT AUTHORITY'S DECISION HAD BEEN SUBJECT OF EXTENSIVE DISCUSSION WITHIN FOREIGN MINISTRY. CONSENSUS WAS THAT THE PORT AUTHORITY PROBABLY PREFERRED TO SEE THE ISSUED RESOLVED IN THE COURTS. USING FORECEFUL LANGUAGE CLAUDE-LAFONTAINE THEN LAUNCHED INTO LENGTHY DIATRIBE, EXPRESSING ASTONISHMENT THAT USG SEEMED STILL NOT FULLY COMPREHEND DEPTH OF
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FRENCH COMMITMENT TO CONCORDE AND HOW DEEP AND VIOLENT WOULD BE THE WAVE OF ANTI-AMERICAN SENTIMENT THAT WOULD SWEEP FRANCE IF CONCORDE WERE REFUSED ACCESS TO NEW YORK. HOW COULD WE EXPECT THE MAN IN THE STREET, SHE ASKED, TO APPRECIATE THE SUBTLETIES OF "SEPARATION OF POWERS" IN THE U.S. WHEN MANY IN THE GOF DID NOT BELIEVE THAT THE SITUATION IN NEW YORK WAS REALLY BEYOND THE POWER OF THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT TO INFLUENCE DECISIVELY? DID WASHINGTON FULLY APPRECIATE, SHE WENT ON, HOW EMBARRASSING FAILURE TO OBTAIN CONCORDE LANDING RIGHTS IN NEW YORK WAS FOR THE GOF DOMESTICALLY, FOR IT LEFT THE GOF WIDE OPEN TO ATTACKS FROM THE OPPOSITION, ESPECIALLY THE COMMUNISTS. AND, SHE WARNED, IT ALSO GAVE CHIRAC A AMMUNITION AGAINST GISCARD.

(COMMENT: WE HAVE RARELY SEEN CLAUDE-LAFONTAINE SO INCENSED. HER REMARKS WERE IN LINE WITH FOREIGN MINISTER DE GUIRINGAUD'S DEMARCHE TO US ON CONCORDE LAST DECEMBER AND CLAUDE-LAFONTAINE DRAFTED THE AIDE-MEMOIRE GIVEN TO US ON THAT OCCASION (76 PARIS 36745). SHE ALSO CLAIMS TO HAVE PREPARED THE CONCORDE BRIEF FOR GISCARD'S MEETING WITH VICE PRESIDENT MONDALE).

7. CLAUDE-LAFONTAINE'S SUGGESTION THAT CHIRAC MAY BE TEMPTED TO EXPLOIT THE CONCORDE ISSUE SEEMS BORNE OUT BY AN ANNOUNCEMENT VIA AFP THAT A PRESS CONFERENCE ON CONCORDE AT WHICH CHIRAC WILL BE PRESENT IS TO BE HELD AT RPR HEADQUARTERS IN PARIS ON FEB. 16 BY ANDRE TURCAT, FORMER CHIEF TEST PILOT FOR CONCORDE AT AEROSPATIALE AND NOW ADVISER TO CHIRAC "FOR INDUSTRIAL AND TECHNOLOGICAL AFFAIRS".

8. AS FOR THE OPPOSITION, L'HUMANITE REPORTED POSTPONEMENT OF PORT AUTHORITY DECISION IN LENGTHY ARTICLE FEB. 5 UNDER CAPTION: "CONCORDE AT NEW YORK: THE AMERICAN GARROT". ARTICLE TAKES SWIPE AT GOF AND CAVAILLE FOR NOT REACTING VIGOROUSLY TO THIS LATEST US DEVELOPMENT

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AFFECTING CONCORDE. AMCONSUL BORDEAUX TELLS US THAT POSTPONEMENT OF CONCORDE DECISION, COMBINED WITH WESTERN AIRLINES' FAILURE TO BUY AIRBUS AND ANNOUNCEMENT OF PLANNED LAYOFFS AT SNIAS (PARIS 3599), IS CAUSING THE SITUATION TO HEAT UP A BIT IN TOULOUSE, MAINLY AT THE INSTIGATION OF THE PCF AND CGT.

RUSH

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Message Attributes

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